

LAURA BRIDGMAN CENTENARY.

Gabriel Farrell.

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

losses. At Bonn, where the now exiled Karl Barth was then head of the faculty, there were 363 Evangelical theological students in the summer of 1933, against thirty-two at the present time. Figures for the University of Berlin were 769 against 172.

SHORTER ARTICLES AND DISCUSSION

LAURA BRIDGMAN CENTENARY

THE admission of Laura Bridgman, deaf, dumb and blind, to Perkins Institution one hundred years ago in October marked the beginning of an experiment of wide educational import and of scientific interest. Scientists of that day in England, notably Sir Dugald Stewart and Sir Astley Cooper, and educators of the deaf in America, chiefly those at the Hartford Asylum, had decreed with all finality that there was no way to reach behind the double barriers of blindness and deafness. Perhaps this very fact made Samuel Gridley Howe, the first director of Perkins, the more eager to try his hand when he heard of the little girl in Hanover, New Hampshire, deaf, dumb and blind and also deficient in smell and taste.

With only the sense of touch intact Dr. Howe began immediately the herculean task of reaching the imprisoned mind. "One of two ways was to be adopted," wrote Dr. Howe later, "the first and easiest was to go on and build up a system of signs. . . . Such a language could be taught easily . . . but it would have been rude and imperfect. . . . When it came to be applied to abstract matters and moral questions it would have been utterly at fault. . . . The other plan was to teach her a system of purely arbitrary signs, by combinations of which she could give the name of anything and everything, that is, the letters of the alphabet. For this she would only have to learn twenty-six signs, but having learned them, she could express countless modifications of thought by combining them in countless ways."

This reasoning was in accord with Laura's sole remaining perfect sense, for Dr. Howe had already determined that touch must be the dominant sense in the education of the blind. He had recently devised an embossed line type for the blind to read with their fingers, and taking common objects of daily life, a key and a spoon and later a knife and a book, he attached to these objects labels bearing their names in raised letters. The child was made to feel these objects

and the words designating them until she associated name with object. The next step was to detach the labels from the objects and the pupil, given an object, was taught to find the right name for it. The third step was to cut the letters of the word apart and ask the child to pick out the letters which formed the name of the object given her.

A long, slow, tedious process, but it worked, and pressing on step by step, Laura Bridgman learned to use words as a normal person and to employ language to express thoughts and to convey ideas. Laura learned to write with a pencil, and her carefully kept daily journal is one of the chief measures of her progress, but she never learned to talk, even though Dr. Howe believed it possible if he had had time to teach her. From a hopeless, helpless child she grew to be one of the most widely known women in the world. The significance of Laura's achievement, however, lies not so much in the progress that she was able to make as in the fact that all future success with the deaf-blind has been built upon Dr. Howe's initial pioneer work.

Building on Dr. Howe's foundation Perkins Institution has continued to admit deaf-blind pupils. Over a score have been in residence at the school, and at the present time ten are enrolled as pupils in a special department formed and equipped in 1931. With the march of time has come advance in methods. No longer are the embossed letters and manual alphabet used as first steps. Instead, articulation is taught from the outset and through vibration deaf-blind children are able to hear spoken language. The aim now is to make communication as normal and as natural as possible so that any one, not only those who know the manual language, can talk with them. That this can be done has been proved in the last few years and can be demonstrated by the several pupils now in residence at Perkins.

GABRIEL FARRELL,
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PERKINS INSTITUTION
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Cambridge, author and critic; Burton W. James, director of Washington State Theater, and Professor Thomas Whipple, of the University of California. In addition to the usual committee and departmental meetings there will be special sessions on "The Experience Curriculum in Practice"; "The Motion Picture and Radio"; "Relating English to Life"; "Speech"; "The English Program in the Elementary School"; "Meeting Life Needs through College English," and "Problems of English Organizations." The convention headquarters will be at the Hotel Statler. A trip to Niagara Falls has been arranged as part of the entertainment program.

MEMBERS of the New York State Teachers' Association living near New York City will meet on October 8 and on October 29 as part of the autumn meeting of the association. Some 40,000 members of the organization will meet in various parts of the state in the course of the month. Members of the Long Island zone, which includes teachers of Suffolk and Nassau Counties, will hold their annual meeting on Friday, October 8, in Hempstead. Teachers who live in the southeastern zone, comprising Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester Counties, have set October 29 for their meeting in New York City. At each meeting speakers prominent in education will address the teachers, and members will participate in small group meetings. Claude L. Kulp, superintendent of the Ithaca schools and president of the association, recently announced that the annual meeting of the house of delegates of the association would be held on November 22 and 23 at Jamestown. An attendance of seven hundred delegates is expected, and officers for the coming year will be elected. Next month's meetings will be held in all the ten zones of the association. Besides New York City and Hempstead, meetings have been announced for Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Potsdam, Lake Placid, Schenectady, Elmira and Watertown.

THE Citizens' Committee appointed to further the establishment of a public junior college in Nassau County, L. I., will hold a conference on October 15 at the Bethpage Country Club, Farmingdale, L. I. The speakers will include Dr. Harlan H. Horner, of the New York State

Department of Education; Dr. John S. Allen, of Colgate University; Dr. Frederick B. Robinson, president of the College of the City of New York; Dr. John Denbigh, president of Packer Collegiate Institute; Dr. Byron S. Hollinshead, president of the Keystone Junior College; Dr. John O. Creager, of the department of college education of New York University; Dr. Walter C. Eells, editor of *The Junior College Journal*; Dr. Constance Warren, president of the Sarah Lawrence College, and Dr. Frederic Ernst, assistant superintendent of the New York City high schools. Dr. T. A. Stanforth, chairman of the program committee, will preside at the morning session of the conference, and Dr. James N. MacLean, chairman of the Citizens' Committee, at the afternoon session.

THE London *Times* writes that an important addition to the British National Trust properties in Derbyshire has been made through the gift by Alderman J. G. Graves, of Sheffield, of 52 acres of land in the Miller's Dale district. Alderman Graves had previously given the Trust 200 acres of Shining Cliff Woods in the Derwent Valley at Whatstandwell. The present gift includes the house known as Ravenstor, and it is conditional on the house being made available as a youth hostel. The new trust property is a triangular piece of land half a mile south of Miller's Dale station, and includes about one mile of the River Wye in one of its most beautiful limestone gorges and Tideswell Dale, a well-known natural rock garden. The property is bounded by the Tideswell-Miller's Dale road and is close to Litton Mill. The new youth hostel, which will be opened early next year, will have 80 beds. It is 12 miles from Derwent Hall and 10 miles from Hartington Hall, and thus completes the Derbyshire chain of youth hostels.

AN Associated Press dispatch states that a marked decrease in the number of German Evangelical students of theology is noted in the *Junge Kirche*. Only 2,263 young theologians registered this summer term at German universities, as compared with 6,791 in the corresponding term of 1933, showing that in the four years of the Nazi régime, the number of Protestant theological students declined to one third. Individual universities had even greater relative

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